

## **Competing Cultural Worldviews in the United States: A Phenomenological Examination of the Essential Core Elements of Transnationalism and Transculturalism**

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*The objective of this study was to explore inductively the complex ways in which everyday discourse reflects larger – and often competing – cultural worldviews. A phenomenological framework was used to analyze transcripts generated through 13 focus group discussions involving 100 individuals. This particular analysis highlights how individuals who adopted a transnational worldview worked to transform cultural divisions through criticism of existing labels that failed to capture the multicultural nature of their identities. Alternatively, individuals who adopted a transcultural worldview worked to transcend traditional cultural divisions through a rejection of traditional labels that worked against one unified social identity. The thematic insights generated through the study are significant in that they provide a heuristic framework for scholars and practitioners who are interested in promoting greater understanding through engaging transnationalism, transculturalism, and related issues. Key Words: Transculturalism, Transnationalism, Phenomenology, Cultural Identity, Cultural Labels, Assimilation, U.S. Diversity.*

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In many ways, the United States is a country of immigrants. According to Pedraza (2006), U.S. history has been shaped by four distinct waves of immigration. The first wave (18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century) consisted of large numbers of immigrants from Northern and Western Europe, as well as the forced migration of persons from Africa. The second wave of immigration (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century) came largely from Eastern and Southern Europe. The third wave reflected one of migration, and not necessarily immigration. It involved an internal migration of African Americans, Native Americans, Mexican Americans, and Puerto Ricans, relocating from the south to the north (1924–1965). The final wave of immigration started approximately 40 years ago and featured a large influx of people from Asia and Latin America; recently, these individuals have come to represent more than 50–75% of all immigrants in any given year (Larsen, 2004).

Of particular interest to this research study are the ways in which current immigrant populations are different from those of the past. We are especially interested in how contemporary immigrant experiences are regarded by second–and third–generation immigrants. According to Huntington (2005), none of the top five nations of origin for immigrants in 1960 (i.e., Italy, Germany, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Poland) were the same for 2000 (i.e., Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, and Cuba). This trend, alone, has had a tremendous effect on the cultural landscape of the U.S. However, just as

important to acknowledge, are the ways in which immigrant experiences no longer follow a process of natural, continuous, and irreversible cultural assimilation (Suarez-Orozco, 2000). As such, the U.S. continues to (re-)define its stance on immigration and negotiate the tensions that are inherent in political, social, and cultural debates related to the topic (Domke, McCoy, & Torres, 2003). As articulated by Barkan (2007), immigrant experiences remain a salient issue for contemporary research.

The focus of our study explores the current cultural landscape of the U.S., with a particular concentration on how individual communicative experiences inform, and are informed by, larger cultural realities. More specifically, the objective of this study was to examine inductively the complex ways in which everyday discourse reflects larger – and often competing – cultural worldviews. In doing so, we sought to offer much needed clarification to the convoluted usage of existing terminology (i.e., transnationalism and transculturalism) to describe various communicative processes and experiences. As Kavoori (1998) has described, these terms have “gained considerable currency . . . [and] indicate a categorization of global experience in expansive terms – i.e. beyond traditional models of nation-states and discrete cultures” (p. 202). Yet, conceptualizations of both transnationalism and transculturalism remain inconsistent across contexts (Barkan, 2007). Within our scholarly inquiry, we regard transnationalism and transculturalism as competing cultural worldviews. Consequently, we utilize a phenomenological analytic frame to reveal the ways in which diverse communicative experiences reflect the essential elements that function at the core of each paradigm. Prior to the explication of these thematic insights, we present summaries of our conceptual framework.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Early in the 20th century, Randolph Bourne (1916) used the term, transnationalism, to describe an enlightened means to think about relationships between different cultures. Over the years, transnationalism has been embraced as a means to highlight the increasing sense of connection between people and the demarcation of national, state, and cultural boundaries (Fraser, 2007). In this sense, contemporary scholars have engaged various forms of transnationalism as a point to explore commonalities of a people regardless of national or geographic boundaries *and* the ways in which such positionality is steeped with issues of power, oppression, essentialism, and hegemony. This work has included research that focuses on transnational black communities (Appadurai, 1996; Ebeling, 2003), transnational women’s movement (Mohanty, 1986, 2002), and transnational feminist cultural studies (Kaplan & Grewal, 1994; Spivak, 1993). Within this approach transnationalists embrace a pluralistic vision that influences everyday life at multiple levels (Trubeck, 2006) – one which bridges theory and praxis, the personal and the political, and the similarities and differences that exist within every aspect of human existence (Mohanty, 2003).

With the increase of literature engaging transnationalism, other terms have been used to capture the realities of cultural process; these include both transculturalism (Ortiz, 1995) and vernacular cosmopolitanism (Bhabha, 1996). In some cases, the terms have been used interchangeably while other scholars have been careful to draw important distinctions and avoid overly simplistic binaries (e.g., Nussbaum, 1994). For instance, drawing from the work of Bhabha (1996), Appiah (1998, 2006) argued that

cosmopolitanism involves identification with emotionally significant home communities, but also transcendence of cultural differences and the moral responsibility for the other. Appiah (1998) described a particular type of cosmopolitan – cosmopolitan patriots – prompting other scholars to continue making distinctions among “cosmopolitan patriotism, rooted cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan ethnicity, working-class cosmopolitanism, [and] discrepant cosmopolitanism” (Werbner, 2006, p. 496). At the heart of this issue, is a tension between local specificity and universalism. In other words, “whether the local, parochial, rooted, culturally specific and demotic may co-exist with the translocal, transnational, transcendent, elitist, enlightened, universalist and modernist” (Werbner, 2006, p. 496). This particular issue also exists within the field of communication which has increasingly applied transculturalism and transnationalism to various contexts.

Through an exploration of everyday rhetoric from a particular U.S. region, our study sought to explore this point of contention regarding a “family of concepts” (see Werbner, 2006, p. 496) designed to reflect the realities of cultural relations. In doing so, we hoped to contribute to an increased “theorization of the relationship between these historically grounded terms” (Kaplan & Grewal, 1994, p. 430). Our focus was on transnationalism and transculturalism as communicative phenomenon, consequently our next section focuses on how these concepts have been positioned in the field of communication. For years, communication scholars have explored the intersections of culture, identity, and cross-cultural communication (e.g., Bennett, 1986; Berry, 1980; 1990; Kim, 2001). In this current study, we sought to explore the communicative experiences that are inherent, consciously and/or unconsciously, to the process of adapting to new cultures. More specifically, our goal focused on expanding understanding (Bennett, 1986) of the underlying structures that reflect an orientation (worldview) to cultural difference/similarity (see Pusch, 2004, p. 26). However, the concepts of transculturalism and transnationalism have largely gone underexplored in the field of communication (Urban & Orbe, 2010). Given our interest in advancing these concepts as communicative phenomenon, we focus on the limited, and somewhat problematic, literature used by communication scholars and practitioners.

### **The Transcultural Communicative Experience**

One of the first, and most extensive, treatments of the transcultural communicative experience was offered by Mansell (1981) who defined transcultural experience as: “A multidimensional process of adaptation which, if effectively realized, can bring about significant changes in individual development and attitudes toward others of different national or ethnic origin” (p. 93). This work focused specifically on cross-cultural adaptation and the ways in which successful adaptation to a new cultural environment can stimulate “personal growth and a heightened appreciation of a contrasting cultural reality” (p. 93).

As described below, Mansell’s (1981) use of transcultural communication differs significantly with that of more recent scholars. However, some of Mansell’s insights as they relate to cultural identity remain salient. First, culture, in and through its varying symbolic interpretations, is seen as a key contributor to identity development. In this context, culture is defined as “the organization of human experience in response to a

particular environment. Culture takes the form of ideological, sociological, linguistic, and technological patterns of experience which act as mediators of the ecology to provide ways of seeing and thinking about culture. Each culture equips its members with the ground rules, value orientations, and necessary belief systems through which social reality is constructed” (Mansell, 1981, p. 96). Second, a person’s sense of cultural self is integrally related to his/her perceptions of the larger scheme of things. Third, and lastly, cultural identity functions through facilitating identification with particular aspects of the world – a synergistic process that carries important meaning and significance.

Over time, transcultural communication has been used synonymously with other terms such as intercultural and cross-cultural communication; this has especially been the case as scholars have attempted to highlight the concept within various undergraduate textbooks (e.g., Samovar & Porter, 1991). Such uses of the term are consistent with the work of Smith (1973) who described transracial communication as the process by which individuals could cross racial lines to communicate. Like Mansell (1981), this line of scholarship interpreted transcultural as crossing boundaries. Scholars and practitioners have been adopted the term to describe efforts designed to increase intercultural communication skills and to advance a “new form of intercultural communication in a globalized world” (Baraldi, 2006, p. 53).

More recent research has promoted transcultural communication as means through which dialogue serves as an effective basis for successful cross-cultural adaptation. For example, Lustig and Koester (2006) describe efforts promoting professional development opportunities toward new forms of *transcultural nursing*. Interestingly, a similar set of skills and an accompanying shift in worldview is characterized as *transnational management* in other writings (Adler & Bartholomew, 1997). In addition, in their essay on guidelines to management in a global context, Adler and Bartholomew (1997) make a distinction between managers whose business strategies and skill sets can be characterized as “domestic, international, multinational, or transnational” (p. 81). Accordingly, the focus of this form of transcultural communication “aims to create a new, harmonized and coherent culture of respect and reciprocity, adopting cultural forms that have value in [a] functionally differentiated society” (Baraldi, 2006, p. 64). The goal, then, is to promote a new monocultural perspective that is reflective of an emergent, shared third culture (Onwumechili, Nwosu, Jackson, & James-Hughes, 2003) where intercultural communication is replaced by new forms of intracultural communication (Carbaugh, 1990).

### **Transnationalism and Transnational Identities**

The body of literature exploring transnationalism focuses on how individuals simultaneously maintain multiple social/cultural realities, in educational, interpersonal and organizational contexts (Adler & Bartholomew, 1997). While some scholars suggest that immigrants have always practiced transnationalism, to some extent, existing literature has not always acknowledged the implicit and explicit ways in which immigrants have remained connected to their nation of origins while also assimilating to new cultural homes (Baia, 1999). According to Kivisto (2001), this phenomenon has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars over the past decade and scholarship on

transnationalism has moved beyond the assumption that a consistent, unidimensional core identity is necessary for a productive self-concept (Falicov, 2005).

While recent discussions of transnationalism have debated the need for refined definitions and advanced theorizing (Virell-Fuentes, 2006), scholars generally agree that research must continue to explore the phenomenon in the context of new, emerging realities (Levitt, 2001). Researchers must determine the ways in which current, modern-day transnationalism – especially that which occurs within the context of globalization (Baraldi, 2006) – is distinguished from that of the past. Consequently, scholars cannot equate transnationalism with frequent and physical contact with an individual's nation of origin (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Media, & Vazquez, 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Equal attention must be given to how psychological and emotional identification to one's cultural homeland is negotiated alongside emerging cultural identities (Burrell, 2003). While transnationalism may be measured by explicit indicators (e.g., international travel, participation in transnational organizations, language maintenance), scholars must also seek ways in which transnational allegiance is achieved through "thoughts, visions, and fantasies" (Pessar & Mahler, 2003, p. 818). One of the means to explore this implicit form of negotiation is through explorations of transnational identities.

Studies on transnationalism have increasingly focused on the emergence of transnational identities. Within this perspective, individuals moving from one country to another are seen as not having to abandon their old identities for the sake of assuming new ones. As such, simultaneous attachment to multiple cultural homes is regarded as an alternative to choosing one over the other (Cheng, 2005). A transnational identity emerges when individuals choose to see themselves as a reflection of two or more cultures (Pedraza, 2006). According to Schiller, Basch and Blanc (1995), this reality – one which situates the need to unite international cultures into one public identity – becomes more prominent in a global community where national boundaries have, through transportation and communication technological advances, become less fixed (Cheng, 2005).

While significant work on transnationalism has existed across disciplines, communication scholars have adopted it as a conceptual frame to study the complexities of identity. For instance, Yep (2002) has explored his own transnational identity and articulated his personal journey navigating the multiple aspects of his sense of self. Yep's self-descriptions include:

I am Asianlatinoamerican. Although I have never been to China, I am racially what my parents describe as "100% pure Chinese." During my formative years, we lived in Peru, South America, and later moved to the United States. I learned to speak Chinese first, mainly to communicate with my grandmother, a traditional Chinese woman who rarely ventured beyond the boundaries of the Chinese community in Lima. I then learned to speak Spanish in school in Peru, where we lived until I finished high school at the age of 15. I started learning English when I came to the United States to attend college . . . I "look Asian American," yet at times my Latino culture is most prominent in some communication settings. I strongly identify with all three cultures, and they are more or less

integrated into this complex entity that I label as my “multicultural self.”  
(pp. 60-61)

Yep’s reality, according to some researchers, is best described as that of a *third culture person*: Individuals whose international upbringing facilitates a sense of relating to “many cultures of which they are a part . . . reflect[ing] a composite set of values, norms, and social structures . . . that contain some of all the cultures” (Jordan, 1998, p. 242).

In comparison, Rogers-Pascual (2004) offers three different approaches to understanding how individuals traverse “disparate cultures in a transnational world” (p. 288). Rogers-Pascual (2004) situates a transnational identity as one where “two cultures intermingle to the point of becoming almost one – that is, something entirely new – inextricably entangled and mutually reflecting each other’s contradictions” (p. 288). Drawing from the work of Featherstone (1995), Rogers-Pascual advocates for studying identity through hybridization, a social process that considers the tension between assimilation to, and resistance of, dominant culture as inextricable to the negotiation of cultural identity. As such, issues grounded in socio-political-cultural power are acknowledged.

As intercultural communication scholars, this project was conceptualized as a means to gain insight into how individuals negotiated multiple cultural identities in contemporary U.S. culture. As people of color (Spanish Filipino/European American male raised in the Northeast and African American woman raised in the South), we were particularly interested in exploring how people consciously and unconsciously use racial/ethnic (or other cultural) labels to describe themselves and others. While this was the initial focus, we soon understood that our focus group discussions would provide a potentially rich opportunity to also engage topics like identity, cultural socialization, and ingroup/outgroup relations. Within our initial data analysis, we began to take note that all transcripts contained direct and indirect references to larger cultural worldviews – something that led to our exploration of transculturalism and transnationalism. As such, we did not specifically set out to explore issues of transculturalism and/or transnationalism. Instead, we were interested in gaining insight into the complex ways in which everyday conversations reflect larger cultural worldviews. However, as we became engaged in the project and began to review the focus group transcripts and identify emerging themes, issues related to transculturalism and transnationalism began to reveal themselves as key organizing principles. Existing literature provided a conceptual framework to help structure our analysis; yet as described earlier, it was somewhat problematic given that the two terms have not been used consistently or explored comparatively with any depth (Kavoori, 1998). Consequently, our analysis drew from existing literature while simultaneously offering important clarity and development to the concepts of transculturalism and transnationalism. As described in the next section, this spiraling process of discovery is consistent with phenomenological inquiry.

### **Methodological Framework**

The data analyzed for this study was part of a larger project that explored language, identity, and ingroup/outgroup communication with individuals in a large southeastern U.S. city. The full description of this study, including objective statement,

institutional review board documents, descriptions of focus group procedures, and transcripts are available from the second author. The University of Miami Institutional Review Board approved all of the procedures used within our study (IRB/HSRO Study Protocol ID# 20060337).

To allow for an inductive exploration of the topic, we utilized a phenomenological approach to study how a diverse group of U.S. Americans experiences these issues in discussions with others. Grounded in a historical movement inaugurated in Europe through the work of scholars such as Husserl (1964; 1970) Merleau-Ponty (1962; 1968) and others, phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) – the world as we immediately experience it pre-reflectively rather than as we conceptualize or theorize it. Within the U.S., scholars (e.g., Lanigan, 1979; Nelson, 1989; Peterson, 1992) have utilized phenomenology as a qualitative methodology that rigorously describes, thematizes, and interprets the meanings of everyday phenomena (van Manen, 1990). This methodological framework is especially relevant for researchers interested in providing participants with an opportunity to voice their own communicative lived experiences in an unconstrained manner (Nelson, 1989).

According to Lanigan (1979; 1988), phenomenology includes a three-step process of discovery: (a) collection of descriptions of lived experiences, (b) reduction of *capta* into essential themes, and (c) hermeneutic interpretation of themes. As described below, we utilized focus group discussions to generate descriptions of lived experiences (as they unfolded within a group context) because we understood how individuals experience issues of culture, language, and identity as they relate to others – both individuals and groups (Hecht, Jackson, & Ribeau, 2003). The following sections explain how the study engaged in each stage of phenomenological inquiry.

## **Participants**

For our study, we sought out participants in order to secure a non-probability sample that was both convenient and purposive. Individuals were recruited as participants through flyers distributed throughout the college communities of South Florida. These flyers indicated that the purpose of the study was to explore communication between people of different racial/ethnic groups. Participants could be male or female, 18 to 99 years of age, undergraduate, graduate or professional students of any race, ethnicity or nationality who spoke English and were willing to engage in a one-time only, focus group discussion for 60–90 minutes. Interested individuals were directed to contact the second author or research assistant via email. When contacted, the research assistant sent a demographic information questionnaire to be filled out and returned by email. The demographic sheet asked the individual to self-identify racially and ethnically and to provide the following information: year in school, major, country of birth and citizenship, age and participation availability dates and times. In addition, copies of the consent forms were sent to potential participants to preview so that any questions or concerns could be addressed before the assignment to a group.

The recruitment process was followed until enough participants were secured representing significant diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and nationality. Of the 100 total participants, the majority (72) were born within the U.S; while 28 were born outside the U.S with citizenships in Trinidad, United Kingdom, Jamaica, Bahamas, Germany,

Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador, Chile, Mexico, Brazil, Italy, France, Costa Rica, and Kuwait. Ultimately, this large number of participants was deemed significant in terms of its potential to generate a data set where both diversity of experience and saturation of data would be achieved (Wertz, 2005).

### **Focus Group Discussions**

According to Morgan (1997), researchers use focus groups as an efficient means to gather data in relatively structured or unstructured formats. From a phenomenological perspective, the purpose of focus groups is to gather data where participants can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton, 1983). Utilizing focus groups within phenomenological research provides researchers the opportunity to gain insight from the unrestrained vantage point of participants (Durgee, 1987) – especially when facilitators use a general conversational approach whereby participants can describe their experiences with only a general focus toward the phenomenon under study (Wertz, 2005). As such, phenomenological focus groups can be characterized as flexible, probing, and synergistic, the results of which are not possible through individual interviews (Staley, 1990).

Using models of existing research that explored communication and race/ethnicity (e.g., Warren, Orbe, & Greer-Williams, 2003), individuals were placed into a focus group based on their self-designated racial/ethnic identity. This placement criterion established some level of homogeneity and allowed for greater free-flowing discussions among group participants (Morgan, 1997). Over the course of several months (September 2006 – May 2007), a team of facilitators completed 13 focus groups: one focus group was comprised of people of Asian descent, three groups contained people of African descent, four groups included people from Hispanic cultures, and five groups were made up of people of European descent.

Each focus group was led by a facilitator who identified with the members of the group. Consistent with existing focus group research (Warren et al., 2003), we consciously selected facilitators who shared the racial/ethnic background of the participants in a particular focus group. Each facilitator was trained by one of the two authors of the study, both of whom have had 15+ years of experience conducting phenomenologically-based focus groups with various cultural groups. Facilitator training included how each person should prepare for the focus groups, including engaging in pre-reflection (Nelson, 1989) whereby conscious self-reflection was used to bracket one's own experiences, perceptions, and biases with the topic (Lanigan, 1979). Facilitators were also instructed to obtain informed consent from each participant prior to the beginning of the focus group discussion (something that participants had been briefed on when contacted earlier), and explain the anonymity of comments within the study and expectations of confidentiality among participants. Finally, facilitators were instructed on how to utilize a similar Topical Protocol to guide (but not direct) the focus group discussion. Topical Protocol questions (see Appendix) were generated from ongoing discussions between both authors, and focused on individuals' perceptions of, and thoughts about, a number of topics including: racial and ethnic labels, interactions with others like, and unlike, themselves, and interactions that participants thought were most



meaningful. A professional team, who specializes in culturally competency issues, transcribed all of the focus group audiotapes.

### **Phenomenological Reduction**

The 13 focus groups produced 491 pages of transcribed discussions. We engaged this large text through a phenomenological frame (Lanigan, 1988; Merleau-Ponty, 1968) that facilitated a process of review that allowed us to focus on what participants inductively describe as essential elements of particular cultural worldviews. While the focus group discussions represented the first stage of a phenomenological study (collecting descriptions of lived experiences), the second stage involved a multileveled process of analysis through which transcripts were analyzed independently and then collectively by both authors until preliminary themes were identified (Nelson, 1989).

The goal of a phenomenological reduction is to determine which parts of the transcripts reflect essential structural features of cultural worldviews and which are not (Ihde, 1986). We began this process by individually reading through each transcript without making any notations. Using the selective reading approach (van Manen, 1990), we sought to identify particular statements and phrases that appeared especially insightful. Consequently, during our second review of each transcript, we highlighted words, phrases, and recollections that emerged as essential in the lived experiences of participants. Following this, a third review was completed whereby we began to thematize those sections of the transcripts that appeared to capture similar ideas. At this point in our phenomenological reduction process, we shared our initial themes with one another and utilized imaginative free variation to determine if each preliminary theme was interconnected, redundant, or incidental (Lanigan, 1979). This procedure involved engaging each preliminary theme to analyze it as an essential component while all other initial themes were bracketed, or consciously set aside (see, for example, Orbe, 2000). During this rigorous process of analysis, two clusters of themes emerged to capture the essence of competing cultural worldviews. During the final step of phenomenological inquiry, we engaged in a hyper-reflective process (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) whereby transculturalism and transnationalism emerged as organizing structures to understand how the clusters of themes relate to one another.

### **Thematic Analysis**

Our phenomenological reduction of the transcript data revealed a number of thematic insights in regards to how a diverse set of individuals think about cultural identity, cultural labels, expectations, and perceptions relate to culture. Within this section, we draw from these points of analysis as they work – both consciously and unconsciously – to inform what we conceptualize as two competing cultural worldviews: Transnationalism and transculturalism.

### **Transnationalism**

Consistent with existing work on transnational identity (e.g., Yep, 2002), transnationalism reflects a worldview where individuals with significant exposure to

cultural/global diversity see the world in new ways, that is, not as neat and tidy, but rather as complex and messy. As described in each of the sections below, this worldview represents a transformation of old ways of seeing self and others.

**Cultural identities.** From a transnational worldview, cultural identity is seen as a messy, complicated synthesis of multiple points of association. Multidimensional identities are regarded as the norm within a transnational worldview. This perspective incorporates a variety of cultural allegiances and blends them together, often within an increase of global awareness. As one Hispanic female participant aptly stated, “I’m a citizen of the world. I’m not a citizen of a specific place.” Her comments do not reflect possession of multiple passports, but instead a consciousness of being a global citizen, something reflective of transnationalism.

Within the focus group transcripts, the most common manifestation of a transnational identity involved individuals who describe themselves as a blend of several cultures that spanned different countries. For example, within the focus group of Asian participants, one woman described herself as “pure Indian,” but went on to explain how as a third generation Trinidadian, her identity blends Indian and Caribbean cultures. Another focus group participant described the complexity of his transnational identity in similar ways. He stated:

By blood, I’m Indian. My grandparents were born there. But both my parents were born outside of India – my mom in England, my dad in the Philippines. But they’re both Indian by blood as well. Me and my brother and sister were all born in England . . . I don’t speak Hindu, or Hindi, and don’t know any customs or anything. So, I guess it’s hard for me to identify only as Indian – I’m just as much English.

Interestingly, transnational identities were not confined to individuals with dual citizenships, or those who had traveled extensively. Our analysis also revealed the adoption of a complex, multifaceted identity that incorporates multiple domestic co-cultures within one nation. This appeared to be most apparent with individuals whose parents were from different racial and/or ethnic groups. The descriptions of a male participant in one of the Hispanic focus groups best captured this variation of the theme:

Being mixed, this is like an even crazier situation for me. Alright? My mother is Mexican American – second generation. My father is Russian-Jewish descent. My last name is a very Jewish name. And when people see me, at first glance they think I’m Italian . . . Then second they’re like, “Oh, but he’s got that Jewish last name. Are you from Israel or something? You’re like one of the dark ones.” I’m like, “No, I just have a Mexican mother.” It’s so strange . . . because it seems like people can’t understand it.

“It,” as utilized by this particular person, appeared to refer to a set of complex, multicultural identities that the speaker incorporated into one transnational identity. As

explicated in the next section, attempting to utilize existing labels to describe this cultural reality was a hotly contested issue.

**Cultural labels.** According to our thematic analysis, participants described attempts to force multicultural persons into neat, tidy categories as never-ending. Sometimes, this was done *to* individuals based on others' preconceived ideas. In other situations, people simply ask multicultural persons: "What are you?" but were not satisfied with responses until they reflected greater allegiance with one particular aspect of their identity. Across a variety of focus groups, many participants explained how they embraced a "hyphenated identity" (e.g., Cuban American or Haitian American). One woman's articulation of her transnational identity illustrated the impossible task of selecting one singular label:

My mother is Colombian. My biological father is Cuban. But I was raised by a Dominican stepfather. Then in the area we grew up in – Massachusetts – there were a lot of Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Mexicans . . . I don't know how to like describe myself. I know that I am – I identify myself mostly as Latin, but when I go to Colombia, I'm the American girl from the Arabic family because my grandfather is Lebanese over there. When I go to the Dominican Republic, I'm just the American girl. But then I'm here in America and "she's Latin" or "she's Hispanic" or "she is . . ." There's always a title but it never fits.

Labels, especially those that were forced upon people, were an issue of importance to participants; this was particularly the case with people of color, prompting one Hispanic woman to assert: "We WILL label ourselves." This specific issue also was salient among people of African descent. Several individuals described how the terms, "African American" and "Black," were often used freely; however, these terms were not inclusive of those persons who identified more closely with different Caribbean cultures (e.g., preferring the label, Jamaican American, rather than Black). One woman offered the following narrative to explain her perspective:

There are differences between American Blacks and Caribbean Blacks. There is a difference. Let me tell you I had to go through that myself. [In my high school] Blacks would pick on Haitians and I would hide. I was Haitian at home and what not, but then in school I pretended like I wasn't Haitian. They would never really question me because of my name, but I was living a lie . . . I had to recognize that this is my native culture, the Haitian background and I have to consolidate it, too. Okay, I'm Haitian American. I'm not one or the other. Both of them are equally influencing.

Within this excerpt, this woman described her resistance to societal pressures that would force her to push certain cultural identities to the background. Her experiences help to illustrate the connection between cultural identity and labels and the perceptions that inform a transnational worldview.

**Perceptions of culture.** Consistent with other core elements of transnationalism, culture is perceived as a salient aspect of life, one that has great inherent complexity. As such, culture is not seen as irrelevant or simplistic. One man, in describing his friends' simplistic understanding of Spanish speakers, reflected on his competing perceptions of culture.

People have to understand that there is a huge cultural difference [between different Hispanic groups] based on region, age, etc. . . . even in forms of Spanish that we speak. You know, the further south you go, the different the dialect is. I speak Castilian Spanish, which is right from Spain. But I know a lot of kids around here don't. They speak another completely different dialect. So, when I'm out, my friends are like, "Go speak to them in Spanish." And I'm like, "You don't understand. We may not even understand each other because the two dialects are so different."

Evidence of this cultural perspective was evident throughout other focus group transcripts. In some, participants discussed the false assumptions that often plague Middle Easterners (e.g., confusions of national, ethnic, political and religious points of identity). In others, enlightening conversations regarding the diversity within Black and Hispanic communities reflected recognition of the complexity inherent in any one group designation. Transnationalism, then, was distinguished as a worldview that avoids overarching generalizations. Instead it embraces a multi-faceted conceptualization of culture that includes an acknowledgement of similarities and differences based on race, ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, and socio-economic status.

Another salient perception regarding culture within a transnational worldview was grounded in the ways in which cultural diversity enhances one's life. Such a perspective was illustrated through several comments, like that of a White male participant who comments on how much he was learning in college. He shared:

Being down here [southeast U.S.] . . . I'm learning a lot. I knew nothing about the Cuban culture. So, I'm just having a great time finding out about it and finding out more about South Americans, Columbians, Venezuelans, Costa Ricans . . . We don't have much diversity like that in Philadelphia where I'm from.

A White woman, in a different focus group, reported that she has witnessed how cultural differences are increasingly celebrated, and not feared.

I think that lately people are more comfortable with it [racial/ethnic difference]. I feel that now more than before people of different races are friends . . . they say things to one another, learn from one another. I don't think that either one is going to usually get offended. I think people are more comfortable; it's actually less taboo than it was before.

This sentiment was expressed across various focus groups. Many described embracing a key tenet of transnationalism: Cultural diversity enhances my life. As one Hispanic participant concluded, diversity is “a good thing”:

It's just that a lot of people come from different countries and they immigrate. So you're going to have a lot of different racial groups, and everybody should be proud of their ethnicity. I think just to bring out that uniqueness they're going to show where they're from . . . . We have an abundant amount of cultures – that's a good thing.

**Expectations related to culture.** Historically, the United States was seen as a melting pot where people from different cultures came together and transformed into “Americans.” Consequently, cultural expectations were steeped in the assumption of assimilation. A core element of transnationalism, however, lies within an expectation that society should work to accommodate different cultures and not force them to assimilate.

The issue of cultural expectations was a point of discussion across the different Hispanic focus groups. In particular, the issue was addressed in regards to tensions felt between those debating efforts to make English the official language of the U.S. As articulated by the comments of one woman below, a transnational worldview sees such attempts as a form of forced assimilation.

A lot of people say things like, “Oh, if you're here you have to learn English . . . if you're here lose your culture basically to the American culture.” But I don't think that – I mean I don't personally agree that that should be expected. I mean, yes, it's good if people should learn that. But I think it's something that – I mean there are so many factors that come into it . . . . I think we should be more open to everybody's culture and try to work around that. Everything is global and everybody is moving in and out from different places – you can't expect everyone to be the same.

In this regard, transnationalism places culture in the foreground; it is something that should be acknowledged and embraced. Viewing one aspect of a person's culture as irrelevant is seen as unnecessary, if not unrealistic. As one man described, “I don't drop the ‘American’ or the ‘Cuban.’ I can't.” He went on to explain, “I'm Cuban American because I absorb from both cultures. I think they're both very relevant in my life, so I always include both of them.” A fellow focus group participant added:

[It's] just like the Irish, Italians, and Jews . . . they are considered White but they still hold on to their identity. There is still this label that classified them because it serves a purpose of garnering that identity and having something to build upon. It gives a sense of community, a sense of belonging, a sense of value.

## **Transculturalism**

As explicated within the previous section, transnationalism reflects a transformation of traditional cultural divisions. Alternatively, our analysis of focus group transcripts revealed how individuals see the world through a transcultural lens. Consistent with some existing literature (e.g., Mansell, 1981; Smith, 1973), this particular worldview embraces a perspective whereby cultural differences are transcended in regards to identity and labels, something that implicitly influences one's perceptions and expectations.

**Cultural identity.** Within a transcultural worldview, individual cultural identities are regarded as less important than what individuals share on a larger scale. Within our focus group transcripts, such an approach took two different forms. First, some individuals discussed how the commonality of humankind should replace any differences based on cultural identifications. For instance, when asked about the U.S. American system of categorizing people based on race/ethnicity, one White woman asserted:

I don't agree with [that] because I think that, we are all human beings. There is no point of someone being White or someone being Black . . . we actually differentiate between that because God made us all equal. We are the ones who are making the differentiation.

Within this perspective, socio-political distinctions are seen as problematic because they unnecessarily cause social division. A second approach steeped in transculturalism is the importance of embracing an "American" identity. Comments from both White and Hispanic focus groups illustrated this stance. For instance, one White woman who strongly identifies as "a proud American," questioned others who embrace multiple identities.

I was just going to say that, people can categorize [themselves] a million different ways, but when it comes down to it, we are American. We were born in America. We were raised as American kids . . . . When it comes to it, we are American.

Similar comments appeared in each of the other White focus group transcripts, including those from a male participant.

I don't understand why most people here don't identify themselves as American . . . . I'm from a very Italian-Irish town . . . there are Jewish towns too. But I consider myself, above all, American. I don't understand why everyone is so afraid to say that.

Within many of these discussions, other participants questioned and challenged individuals who resist the label of "American" in lieu of other cultural identities. In one focus group of individuals who identify as White, a Cuban American woman shared how she cannot describe herself as "completely American." She was born in the U.S., but her

grandparents were born and raised in Cuba. Her reality, consequently, included a “strong Cuban culture.” Similarly, when other focus group members continued to describe their preference for the term, “American,” one woman reflected:

I don’t know. A lot of us have European backgrounds. Personally I am entirely Lithuanian on one side of my family. When I go home with my grandparents, they speak Lithuanian with me, but I would never say that I am Lithuanian American.

The challenge here is that anyone can claim a diverse cultural background. However, the key to a productive society is to transcend these differences in order to achieve a greater sense of “us.” Labels used to describe self and others, consistent with this transcultural approach, should reflect such a unified front.

**Cultural labels.** From a transcultural worldview, cultural labels hinder one’s ability to transcend existing differences. Consequently, the focus should be on avoiding unnecessary labels whenever possible. One White male participant provided a history lesson that suggested that the time had come to refrain from categorizing individuals into groups that are no longer relevant:

Back in the sixties when Lyndon Johnson was getting ready to pass legislation on race relations, his argument was that we shouldn’t believe in categorizing people as much as letting everybody have an opportunity to start at the starting line . . . . I think that it is necessary to a point to bring about certain equalities. There has to be a point, however, when you can determine when the field has been leveled enough that it no longer matters.

Other focus group participants also provided a number of arguments as to why cultural labels should be avoided. One reason related to the fact that racial and ethnic categories lack any scientific support; instead they are artificial designations that reflect socio-political constructions. Divisiveness is another reason, as captured in the following sentiment: “It becomes really easy to use those labels as a way of pitting groups against each other.” These two issues were the focal point of a number of comments, including those of a Hispanic man:

I just think that the whole notion of categorization is flawed in that it reinforces this notion that we are all different . . . . I just think categorization in this particular setting – in this particular country – fragments us so that people don’t cooperate with one another in a way that they could or should. What it does is undermine any kind of progression that any of us can make to make sure that inferiority disappears . . . and that exploitation and notions of superiority disappear.

Within a transcultural worldview, individuals reject the necessity of using cultural labels that are increasingly problematic and divisive. Alternatively, they advocate for

seeing each person as an individual. So, in response to a question about racial and ethnic labels, one woman in one of the focus groups for people of European descent, asserted:

I don't like to be called anything. I'm just – I'm me. And the color of my skin shouldn't have to classify me as anything. I don't think that should even matter. I would prefer not to be called anything. I'm me and that's just the way I am. [The] color of my skin has absolutely nothing to do with the person that's on the inside and the brain I have, the ability to do work or retain concepts. It has nothing to do with the color of my skin at all.

The value of avoiding specific cultural labels is consistent with other core elements of transculturalism, including various perceptions of culture.

**Perceptions of culture.** Within a transcultural worldview, prioritizing cultural labels over others that unify a society is counterproductive. In fact, transculturalism situates expressions of culture as a threat to social unity. From this perspective, other worldviews like transnationalism lead to unnecessary barriers. One Hispanic participant made this point when he commented:

I think it assumes a world where because of these labels people do segregate themselves within their single communities. So, it does become a lot harder to intermingle cultures where people aren't leaving their cultural enclaves.

The problems associated with identifying with particular cultural groups were discussed across focus groups, including one where a White woman stated:

I think we are all people, and we are all the same, but different cultures and ethnicities seem to stay attached to groups of people . . . like people settle within a culture that they are familiar with, and that is what separates us.

Culture was also discussed as a communicative barrier within those comments that reflected a transcultural worldview. Several participants criticized others – most often new immigrants from Central and South America – who refuse to speak English in various public settings. Within these comments, individuals described feelings of exclusion when cultural differences were highlighted through language; the result of which was a void of meaningful relationships. One White woman explained,

My boyfriend and his family are from Brazil. I've been dating him for like a year and a half . . . I think it is so rude that they always speak Portuguese when I'm there. Like at the dinner table, they'll speak Portuguese – they know I have no idea and they'll laugh. Then eventually someone will look at me and tell me what they said, but I just think it is so rude. I don't know what the big deal is that a couple of hours that I'm in their house they can't just all speak English. I'm not close with them or



don't really know them well because of that. I definitely think that's a barrier – they just refuse to speak English.

In a similar vein, other participants shared how culture served as a communicative barrier during interactions with African Americans who display cultural pride (e.g., a young black male who “preaches about African American rights is stereotyped as very pro-Black”). As a result, some individuals reported “walking on eggshells” around them. Interestingly, others (like the White man quoted below) felt the same apprehension around all African Americans:

I don't mean to overemphasize it, but sometimes talking with someone who's Black can almost be like walking on eggshells sometimes. You're so freaked out of being offensive in some way that you wouldn't be aware of it [if] you were talking to someone from your own race.

Given the focus of transcending difference within a transcultural worldview, perceptions of culture remain fairly simplistic: Cultural distinctions are irrelevant and a hindrance to social harmony. Consequently, some attempts to transcend differences were perceived by others as an inability to understand differences. One White man explained that many people have never paid attention to cultural differences, and now find themselves “mislabel[ing] others mostly out of ignorance.” This dynamic also was evident in the comments from a Hispanic woman:

I think there's a lot of confusion because there's so much ignorance among the American people. I say that because I was originally at another university and they overheard me one day speaking in Spanish on the phone to my mom. And one girl looks at me, like with a disgusted look on her face, and asked “What language are you speaking?” I told her, “Oh, I'm speaking Spanish.” So, right away, she goes, “So what are you, Mexican?” And I said, “You know, there are other cultures that speak Spanish other than Mexicans.” You know, I was like, “I'm Cuban, thank you very much.” And then right away she's like, “Oh, so what, your parents just got here a couple of years ago?” It was one thing after the other. I was so furious.

**Expectations related to culture.** Whereas a transnational worldview expects that cultural differences will be accommodated, a transcultural worldview assumes that they will be made irrelevant through assimilation. Assimilation involves adopting the cultural norms of the majority, including those associated with values, beliefs, language, and other forms of expression. Assimilation, as a societal expectation, is regarded as the means through which “the American dream” is realized. One Hispanic man attested to this ideal in his comments regarding new immigrants:

I am a firm believer in the fact that you came to this country to better yourself and better your life . . . provide a positive environment for your family. I am not saying [that you should] deny your background and your

heritage, and your language, but you should be able to communicate and live here. That means not focusing on it [one's cultural identity] so much.

As illustrated through these comments, a related expectation concerning culture was that if cultural difference existed, it should be relegated to the background. This was explicitly discussed in a number of different focus groups. For instance, consider the comments of one White male participant.

For most people, when someone tells you that they are Cuban American or something, it serves as background information. I don't think that, when someone tells me they are Italian, or they are Irish, or they are English, or whatever, I don't necessarily form an opinion of them . . . . Almost everyone is originally from somewhere else . . . . So, I just think of it as a little bit about them.

Comments across focus groups facilitated an approach where "cultural background should remain in the background." Many of these comments acknowledged differences in individuals' racial, ethnic, and cultural heritages, but expressed an expectation that such differences should play a minor role in a social order that assumes assimilation.

This reality was seen as occurring more readily as the acculturation process evolves with future generations. Issues related to cultural labels, as well as identity negotiation, were expected to be less irrelevant over time. A White male participant described this in the following excerpt:

I think that it is just recognition of another person's culture. But when someone says "I'm Italian American" it suggests that they show more importance in another culture. Like I am Jewish and I have background in Poland and Russia, but I just say I am American. I do have strong ties to my religion, strong ties to my grandparents, but I don't pay as much importance to it compared to other things . . . . So we may have a little bit different culture, a little different background, but all in all, we are still American.

In a different focus group, a White female participant made a similar point: "I think as America has gotten older, it would shift more towards we're American." She explained that her "grandparents are from Italy" but she "has American ideals . . . . I say I'm an American above all. That's what I am." The assumption is that, over time, all U.S. Americans are expected to transcend any cultural differences.

## **Discussion**

The objective of this phenomenological exploration was to explore the ways in which the everyday rhetoric of a diverse set of individuals reflects larger cultural worldviews. To this end, we identified the core elements associated with two competing paradigms: transnationalism and transculturalism. Our analysis highlighted how each is grounded within assumptions related to cultural identities and cultural labels, as well as

perceptions of, and expectations related to, culture. Further analysis, summarized in Figure 1, provides a number of specific points of comparison that illustrate a series of competing assumptions. This binary configuration of transnational and transcultural assumptions reflects particular points of analysis that are featured throughout the previous section. While existing literature (e.g., Appiah, 1998; Nussbaum, 1998) has criticized such dichotomous thinking as problematic, this summary captures the ways in which our participants understand their own identities in their cultural contexts in which they live.

Figure 1. *Transnational versus Transcultural Worldviews: Competing Assumptions*

Transnationalism	Transculturalism
Transforming Traditional Cultural Divisions	Transcending Traditional Cultural Divisions
Multicultural Identities	Monocultural Identity
Traditional Labels as Problematic	Traditional Labels as Unnecessary
Expectations of Accommodation	Expectations of Assimilation
Culture As Foreground	Culture as Background
Complexities of Culture	Simplicity of Culture
Diversity as Enhancement	Diversity as Barrier/Threat

In short, transnationalism works to transform traditional cultural divisions through criticism of existing labels that fail to provide sufficient expressions of the complexity inherent within multicultural identities. Consequently, culture is seen as a salient contemporary issue whereby cultural differences (if embraced by majority cultures) can make valuable contributions to our social lives. Transculturalism, in comparison, operates from a different set of assumptions. At the core of a transcultural worldview is the need to transcend traditional cultural divisions. This is most effectively accomplished through a resistance to traditional cultural labels that fail to promote a unified social identity. Cultural differences may exist within society; however, they must not be regarded as more important than similarities. Through assimilation cultural differences will eventually disappear; if not, they will continue to serve as an insurmountable barrier to effective communication. Interestingly, our phenomenological inquiry revealed that a transnational worldview was largely embraced by people of color while non-Hispanic

Whites were most likely to be grounded within a transcultural worldview. Given the history of the U.S.—one in which racially dominant groups have benefitted from hegemonic ideologies (i.e., U.S. as a melting pot, colorblind society, *E pluribus unum*)—this might be interpreted as a means to remain racially neutral while maintaining white privilege (Rowe & Malhotra, 2006).

The thematic insights generated through this study are significant in several different ways. First, the study uses a large diverse sample to provide insight into questions regarding the potential of existing concepts to capture both the local and the universal (Werbner, 2006). By focusing on a localized context – a southeastern U.S. metropolitan area – we were able to produce insight that appears to have universal qualities. Second, the study draws from a rich data set as a means to extend existing research that has conceptualized transnationalism, transculturalism, and related terms such as cosmopolitanism and patriotism (Appiah, 2006). For example, our participants' descriptions of creating new identity labels helps to illustrate the dynamic nature of culture as discussed by Appiah (1989) and others. Third, our analysis provides a helpful framework that promotes an increased understanding of how everyday rhetoric is often steeped in underlying assumptions that are counterintuitive. Figure 1 summarizes some of the key assumptions that were embedded within our focus group discussions. Identifying and recognizing these implicit aspects of culture is an important conduit to productive public debate concerning larger cultural discussions (e.g., those involving immigration, multiculturalism, and efforts to make English the official U.S. language). Fourth, and finally, our use of phenomenology represented a unique methodological approach to complement existing essays (Appiah, 1989; Bhabha, 1996; Mohanty, 1986) that have provided significant insight into issues of culture, power, and identity. Through an explication of transcultural and transnational assumptions, we utilized phenomenology to centralize core elements of each worldview without necessarily essentializing large, diverse cultural groups (Bell et al., 2000).

Although our in-depth analysis of two competing cultural worldviews makes a valuable contribution for both intercultural theorists and practitioners, it is not without its limitations. For instance, our data are limited to a population of college students from one large, metropolitan southeastern city in the U.S. Despite the vast diversity of our participants, the focus group discussions did revolve around the unique dynamics of one particular geographical area *and* from the perspectives of one generational cohort. Future research that explores cultural worldviews as expressed through the everyday rhetoric of individuals who are older, less educated, and/or from other locations around the U.S. and abroad would only sharpen the insights provided here (Barkan, 2007). In addition, a combination of both focus groups and individual interviews could be implemented as a way to engage participants in ways that allow for greater substance and depth (Hecht et al., 2003).

In addition, future research would be wise to explore what additional cultural worldviews exist. We focus on the transnationalism and transculturalism of U.S. Americans, but very different cultural worldviews may function in other societies (Bennett, 1993). In fact, our analysis reveals some U.S. citizens appear to operate with a hybrid conceptualization that incorporates aspects of both transnational *and* transcultural worldviews. Further engagement of these realities would help to problematize the tendency to understand these concepts as binary opposites. For example, some African

American participants appeared to embrace a monocultural identity where “Blackness” was situated as an all-encompassing designator for all persons with African ancestry (this includes both Caribbean Blacks and bi-racial persons). This perspective reflects a simplistic conceptualization of culture (i.e., Black versus White) with any promotion of any intragroup division viewed as a threat to collective unity. However, these same individuals spoke to the continued saliency of race in the U.S., something that should not be dismissed or made invisible through the promotion of a color-blind society. In fact, most felt that assimilation, a core element of transculturalism, remains a problematic reality for them (as compared to their White counterparts). As aptly articulated by Houston (2002), additional research is needed to enhance our understandings of the complexity of African American experiences in an increasingly diverse society. The same can be said for all racial/ethnic groups, including persons of European descent.

Within our analysis, we attempt to describe transcultural and transnational realities without treating them as a rigid dichotomy. Despite our attempts, however, we anticipate that some readers might view these concepts as polar opposites with no chance for reconciliation. Adopting a dialectical perspective, like that advocated by Martin and Nakayama (1999), might prove valuable in this regard. Their work offers a fresh alternative to understanding how cultural tensions exist amidst oppositional, but not necessarily polarizing, contradictions (e.g., personal-social/contextual, static/dynamic, differences/similarities, cultural/individual). Future research on transculturalism and transnationalism can benefit from adopting a dialectical perspective in that discussions related to issues of culture and identity can be seen as vibrating between these two competing worldviews, both of which contain elements that are functional, desirable, and appealing (Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). Such an approach could be productive in exploring the complexities of specific worldviews such as those held by African Americans described earlier, as well as, assist us in understanding the tensions that are inherent to the realities of contemporary intergroup interactions.

Currently, discussions in this arena seemingly are dominated by two opposing socio-political stances: Nativists who see allegiance to racial, ethnic, and/or cultural identities as a threat to a unified U.S. American identity, and multicultural advocates who see such differences as central to the core of what it means to be “American” (Cohen-Marks, Nuno, & Sanchez, 2009). In advocating for a dialectical perspective, we are optimistic that effective relational strategies to negotiate existing cultural tensions can be identified (Baxter, 2004) and we remain open to the possibility that such negotiations can ultimately lead to personal, social, and collective growth. This optimism is seen in the work of Aleinikoff (1998), who provided a healthy review of existing immigration debates in U.S.; in short he discussed how “a multicultural nationalism” can productively emerge from existing cultural tensions in the United States.

In conclusion, in conducting this research, we sought to utilize historical concepts related to intergroup relations and intercultural communication scholarship as a means to enhance understanding of contemporary cultural politics. Through an exploration of the everyday conversations of a diverse set of individuals, we were able to provide significant insight into the complex ways in which cultural diversity is regarded within a nation of immigrants. Such attempts will only grow in importance as the cultural landscape of the U.S. continues to confront emerging issues related to culture, identity, and communication.

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## Appendix

### Topical Protocol

1. Historically, in the United States, people have been divided into racial/ethnic categories. What do you think about the American system of categorizing people based on race and ethnicity?

(Probes: If you could change this system of categorization especially as it relates to individuals of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent, what things would you take into consideration? What changes would you make? Why?)

2. What labels are you aware of that identify people of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent in the U.S.? What racial and/or ethnic term do you personally prefer to be called? Why?

(Probes: Has this label changed over time? Is it similar or different to the ways that other family members describe themselves? Why this designation and not the other terms you are aware of that refer to people of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent in the U. S.? Do you ascribe or assign different meanings to these labels? How do you feel when others mislabel you?)

3. How would you describe the people with whom you have your most meaningful communication? What are those interactions like? Who do they involve? Can you describe them for me?

(Probes: What makes these interactions so meaningful? What positive things make them meaningful? How do these interactions contribute to how you see yourself?)

4. Does your communication change in different situations when it involves another individual of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent who is of a different nationality than yours? If so, how?

(Probes: What are some similarities and differences from situation to situation? Tell us about some specific instances that you can remember which help to illustrate these differences or similarities? Are there specific groups that you see yourself as an insider or outsider?)

5. How would describe your communication with other people of African/Asian/European/ Hispanic descent?

(Probes: Can you describe specific times when the communication was positive/effective? Can you describe specific times when the communication was negative/ineffective? What, if any, barriers exist when communicating with others of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent? How, if at all, is communicating with other people of African/Asian/European/Hispanic descent different than with others?

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